

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: July 10, 2014

Agenda Item: Koessler Lake Limit Waiver

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background

Westslope cutthroat trout have been reduced to less than 10 percent of their historic range in Montana. The South Fork Flathead River Drainage comprises half of what is left of pure, interconnected populations. Genetic purity is threatened by non-native rainbow and Yellowstone cutthroat trout historically introduced into 21 mountain lakes in the drainage. These fish are moving downstream and hybridizing with westslope cutthroat. The South Fork Flathead Cutthroat Conservation Project has been systematically removing non-native fish and replacing them with pure westslope cutthroat. The project has successfully chemically treated 12 lakes and an additional six lakes are being genetically swamped. Koessler Lake is scheduled for treatment in September, 2014. Koessler Lake is 86 acres and is located at the head of the Gordon Creek drainage. It is moderately popular with backcountry anglers and some have asked for limit waivers prior to previous treatments to allow more harvest of fish so they are not wasted. Current bag limit is 3 trout/day.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Limit waivers were discussed in the South Fork Flathead Project annual public meeting and at the R-1 FWP Citizens Advisory Committee. The only comments received were how soon anglers could take advantage of waived limits.

Alternatives and Analysis

No Action: Pro—less demand on Enforcement Division to determine from which lake fish were harvested; Con—anglers would not harvest increased numbers of fish prior to treatment; limit waiver builds public support for program.

Waive Daily Limits on Koessler Lake: Pro—this would meet anglers' desires to not waste fish. There have been no known problems with previous limit waivers. Con—could place more demand on Enforcement Division.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends temporarily waiving limits on Koessler Lake to build public support for the project and to answer anglers' desires to not waste fish.

Proposed Motion

I move the combined trout daily and possession bag limits for Koessler Lake be removed effective immediately through August 31, 2014.